

# After the Day

---

Raine Bennett

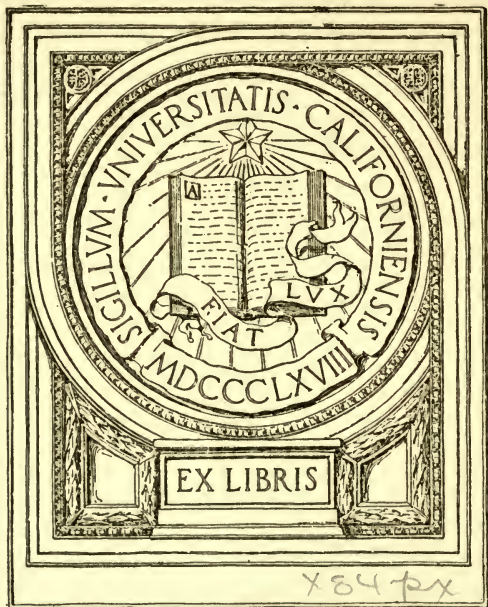
UC-NRLF



\$B 273 455

GIFT OF

Class of 1907.



985  
B472





## AFTER THE DAY



# After the Day

*A Collection of  
Post-War Impressions*

By  
Raine Bennett

With an Introduction by  
George Douglas

Literary Editor of the San Francisco Chronicle



Boston  
The Stratford Co., *Publishers*  
1920

*Class of 1907.*

Copyright 1920

The STRATFORD CO., Publishers  
Boston, Mass.

The Alpine Press, Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

TO WHOM IT MAY COME



## Dedication

**O** *MEMORIED Thebes! Behold what fractured pile  
Uprears its crumbling arches to the sky!  
Around forgotten plinths gaunt shadows lie  
Traced by the gloaming moon. A columned aisle  
Remains, bereft of frieze and peristyle —  
All else is gone. Through wild mimosas sigh  
The vagrant winds, and far, an ibis cry  
Awakes the sinuous liquescent Nile.*

*Here men have sought obliterated golds,  
Have wooed the ancient airs, and held their  
sway —  
Whereat I closed mine eyes to silent molds  
And wandering in fancy, linked Today  
With Yesterday. Then all the Future holds  
Rushed by me like a dream and passed  
away.*

417553



## Introduction

WHATEVER the reader may discover in the poetry of Raine Bennett, he cannot fail to recognize a pronounced individuality and a singular aptitude for dramatic expression. In the detail of form Bennett is not conventional, but his unconventionality in manner is the result of a symphonic cast of mind rather than the pose of a deliberate rebel. Sometimes he appears to be merely improvising with words, but in a few moments we have caught the central theme and are amazed at its magnetic sincerity.

What does it matter whether the verse be free or "fettered," "new" or "old" if the singer have both song and sincerity? It is the irritating pose, the trivial affectation of so many "free verse" bards, rather than their form against which the average reader rebels. Free verse begins, for some readers, with the suspicion of being an affectation, though as a matter of fact there is just as much and possibly more affectation in those formal lines the "music"

## INTRODUCTION

of which conceals so much. Free verse is more transparent, and it is the merit of Bennett that what we see in his work is always worth the seeing.

Always there is some idea expressed through the medium of an emotion, and if the poet is more dramatic than lyric, it is because he is picturing rather than singing about war. He has written several dramas, and as a Californian has the distinction of being the first dramatist of his state to achieve the production of a manuscript at the Greek Theatre, Berkeley. It was a Bedouin tragedy entitled "The Talisman" and was well received by critics and the public at this, its second presentation, having been first produced by literati of Carmel at the "Forest Theatre." Another play, the "South Sea Idol," was given its initial production two years before at the Columbia Theatre in San Francisco. He distinguished himself while a student of law at Stanford University, by participating in the literary plays given by various dramatic societies there, and later interpreted roles in "Fire," an aboriginal drama by Mary Austin, and "Runymede" by William Greer Harrison. The latter apostrophised Bennet's charac-

## INTRODUCTION

terization of King John in a dedicated poem. In addition, Bennett has lectured on the drama, paying special attention to the one-act play. His most recent work is included in this volume.

Mention is made of his dramatic experiences because of their bearing upon this collection of verse "After the Day," which he aptly describes as a series of "post-war impressions, written from the psychological viewpoint of a soldier permanently maimed and confronted with a world of the physically fit, with whom he must continue to be a competitor." These "after the day" or "nocturnal" impressions were all written with a view to their being read aloud, and as dramatic reading they take on a singularly magnetic quality.

The war did not make Bennett a poet, but it revealed the poet in him, and to himself, as much as to his readers. He saw things so clearly and felt so strongly he wanted to set everything down precisely as seen and felt. His work took the form of free verse not because he looked upon that form as final, but because he did not want to leave anything of importance out of the picture or to put in anything merely to fill.

## INTRODUCTION

He wanted the perfect word, whether it happened to be a dactyl or a spondee, hence his "free" or new verse. If the thing seen or the thing felt is more to you than the conventional melody of words, you will more than admire the poetry of Raine Bennett.

This does not mean that he is indifferent to the music of words. On the contrary you will find line after line construed with perfect ear, and in fact the melody is broken only when the thought or emotion so takes possession of him that he refuses to vary the expression to fit the cadence.

The poem of the series which is entitled "Peace" was originally printed in the San Francisco Chronicle. As a result of its publication quite a number of people wrote offering to care wholly or in part for the poet's material wants! The story of the wounded soldier had moved them to the limit of their generosity. It was praised by Witter Bynner, and other poets.

The remaining themes are nearly all on war, and all have distinctive merit as the earnest song of a new singer. In some of them, Bennett gives quite a new meaning to free verse, *for he*

## INTRODUCTION

*shows that it can be free to be perfectly beautiful, melodic, and sometimes even pretty, though strength is his dominant note.*

GEORGE DOUGLAS,

*Literary Editor of the  
San Francisco Chronicle.*





## Contents

Peace . . . . .	1
Raoul's Last Nocturne . . . . .	11
The Shell Crater . . . . .	23
Before Cambrai . . . . .	27
Le Poilu . . . . .	29
Departure . . . . .	31
Antoine, the Birdman . . . . .	33
Found in a Diary . . . . .	40
Soldier, Answer Me! . . . . .	45
Pere Lachaise . . . . .	48
Croix De Guerre . . . . .	55
Wounded . . . . .	57
A Whisper at the Gate . . . . .	59
The Albatross . . . . .	61
Domesday . . . . .	63
Amerongen Castle . . . . .	66
The Sniper . . . . .	69
Passing in the Sun . . . . .	72
The Aviator . . . . .	74
Outriders of the Night . . . . .	77
Le Strynge . . . . .	81
Anarchy . . . . .	83

## CONTENTS

Post Mortem . . . . .	85
Guilty . . . . .	86
Coup d'Etat . . . . .	87
De Profundis . . . . .	88
The Great War . . . . .	89

## MISCELLANEOUS

I Saw a Dead Man . . . . .	100
On Duty . . . . .	102
In a Belgian Prison . . . . .	105
In The Shadows . . . . .	106
A Cashmere Song . . . . .	107







## Peace

SHOULD poets be sent to battle—  
Drafted into service with a gun,  
Or mustered out for service with a pen?  
That is the question old friends are asking,  
And I am yearning to answer them, I who lost  
My legs in Alsace, and my heart in Lorraine.

No one is unkind to me; which I take to be  
A fine deference, because in Lille  
I was a prisoner of War.

As though a dream of childhood had been  
    anticipated,  
I am allowed by my officials  
To watch a flock of Merino sheep  
On a wide farm in the West—  
While idling the hours I trace verses  
On the inside of wrappers embellishing cans  
Of Bordeaux mackerel, caught in Monterey.  
After this manner I strive, if ever so vainly,  
To unburden my mind of its terrors,  
Seeking to forget the scars inflicted on me  
Because I fought for my Country.

## AFTER THE DAY

A quaint adage used by my ancestors read :

“A poet is born, not made —”

But that was long before the war.

I, a mutilated soldier, abandoned by all  
Former associations, tent pals, canteen loungers,  
Officers of the guard, patrols, and Durham —  
Have attained the plains for solace, and am glad !  
For I was once a yokel from the hills  
With a penchant for rhyme and Latin meters,  
So they have carried my body to this sheltering  
Laurel in the glen, and have equipped me  
With the crooked staff of a shepherd —

Even a poet without legs  
Has his usefulness !

The fragrant airs in dalliance  
Blow over miles of May—  
What soldier of this newer day  
Would not follow them, these little winds,  
These whispers from the Infinite that formerly  
Meant nothing, but now have many voices ?

See the hogs, contented and at ease !  
Do you think there is no joy in observing  
Life, instead of Death ?

## AFTER THE DAY

There are horses at pasture, and cows grazing—  
What do they know of explosives?  
Yet how many of these lie rotting  
On the fields of the fleur-de-lis!

In the distance,  
On the plowlands a whistling teamster  
Guides his sorrels, and across the fallow  
A jackass brays! What is more ridiculous than  
that jester,  
Whose ears, and strange noises, vainglorious  
laughs  
And useless prancings are so Hohenzollern?  
With all his legs, who would change places with  
him?  
Not I! His entertainments do not appeal to me—  
I would rather remain a poet.

When fragile violets are plucked from their  
shadows in the forest,  
Knowing full well they will die in the sunlight,  
Do you think less of them for their inability  
To keep pace with the garish day?  
This is my lonely predicament. May I feel how-  
ever,  
On the one theory that flowers about to die  
Are nevertheless welcome—

## AFTER THE DAY

My thoughts may please you, like violets in a  
vase

During their little hour!

Yet were not all these particulars in my land-  
scape

Meant for you and me?

When the fresh blossoms of clover, dew-  
besprent and young,

Upturn their purple harvest to the skies and  
glowing insects,

Do they not smile at heaven,

And at you and me, as well as the butterflies?

But yesterday a troop of bees

Maneuvered across the perfumed grasses

Laden with the spoils of their campaign —

And I had wished all booty

Were as sweet!

When a lark with melodious acclaim

Soars through the dawning clouds,

Is it not to awaken me, as well as you?

These are my consolations!

Here, watching silent acres

Verdant from the tears of stars,



## AFTER THE DAY

And cool meadows reaching from me  
Through emerald seas,  
Sheep browsing, and the far murmur of reeds  
By a winding river —  
All of these are better awards for service  
Than a medal of bronze,  
Or a special dispensation from the Pope.  
They were better, and meant more,  
Before I enlisted.

I had my feet,  
Which I remember were considered necessary at  
the time —  
Encased in strong military boots; my jeans were  
Thrown aside by the sergeant. Thereupon a  
smart uniform  
Was fitted to my figure. The sunburned, straw  
sombbrero  
Now protecting my ears became a felt hat with  
tassels,  
And I was dubbed a “recruit,”  
Which is the nucleus of a soldier.

So my dreams  
Of threshing hay, and the golden glory of the  
moon

## AFTER THE DAY

Rising at dayfall over burnished waves of  
grain —

Were shattered by deracinating cannon,  
And “shell shock” has eclipsed the vision of old  
summers.

I saw a raven fly over sleeping battlefields  
In the gray mists of dawn, and there was a glow  
On its wing, as the passing night  
Draped in malignant shadows the last vestige  
Of its flight. I shuddered when this occurred,  
Because it forboded the dark couriers of the  
Future.

All the rhymes of my boyhood rattled together  
Like the discord of foreign brasses,  
The bugler no longer tongued decasyllabically,  
And I became a strange creature in the ranks  
Continuing to fall out of step  
Without apparent reason;

If I had said  
The cause was in my soul  
They would have laughed at me,  
And called it a “pun” —  
Which, in literature, is perpetrated by a slacker.

## AFTER THE DAY

I have been in service, deep into it,  
Forgetting all but my country, and risking all  
As I would do again; but I have seen  
The body of a poet in Flanders, and I know  
There were words stopped in his mouth  
That could herald peace, and eloquence  
Died in his veins, with beauty's vaster meanings.  
There were exaltations unattained, achievements  
locked

On his pale lips, and songs ineffable  
Forever stilled. I am aware of this, for there  
was a whirr

As of ghostly pinions heard thundering afar  
By several comrades, when they approached his  
remains

Clinging to the wire entanglements  
Above our trenches.

A soldier who has fought  
Against the offensive called Death comes face to  
face

With Poetry, as a spirit does its Maker.

If you doubt these morals wrought from No  
Man's Land,

Let the gaunt survivors of battlefields  
Tell their stories!

## AFTER THE DAY

Ah, there shall be heartrending pity then,  
Commingled with that anguish all animals must  
feel

When hunted down, for no wrong-doing  
Save the insolence of Life.

There shall be mystery, and romance,  
Grand sacrifice, and martyrdom recounted,  
And what empyreal glory men experience  
In the flying havoc of war!

Let the wounded tell of their bleeding,  
And the hush of silence closing in on them;  
Speak to a convalescent aviator, for instance,  
A birdman who has heard  
The eagle scream his triumph from the skies —  
Ask him to recall the long afternoons, bound in  
cotton and gauze,

The gassed maniacs crying in cots,  
And those faithful soothsayers, the nurses,  
Moving so carefully, so quietly!

When a nurse smiles  
One never knows whether it is a rule  
Of the Red Cross, or the Eternal Feminine  
Striving to conceal a multitude of griefs,  
Knowing there is no room for laughter  
In all that desolation.

## AFTER THE DAY

Would that the splendid dead  
Could divulge their adventures —  
Reveal the immutable secrets of God,  
And dwell no more in unknown, platonic  
heights!

There were fine tales made for children,  
On the flaming fields of France:  
Tales of cutthroats, and merciless barbarism,  
Of robbery, pillage and destruction;  
Yarns of strange murders committed at sea  
By men who strove to win great wars  
By drowning mothers, and speeding infants  
heavenward  
Before their time. Then will follow glorious  
narrative,  
And how most famous Admirals forbade  
The encircling oceans to these brigands of the  
deep,  
While strong, sabred veterans, scarred by many  
trials,  
Hurled millions of crusaders over there!

I have heard the lusty, silver shouting  
Of a regiment cruising Eastward: "Free-  
dom!"—

## AFTER THE DAY

O, that was a battle cry; and I was there,  
All of me, to make the world safe for Democracy!

Now come the last scenes of all:  
Their settings are of gray sunsets,  
With streaks of red, to light the naves  
Of famous cathedrals, and cities old in story.  
Drifts of smoke roll through the village streets  
Commingling the secret souls of men  
Like incense curling from twilight tapers  
Into the mauve beyond! Thus you will have  
Before your mind's eye a picture  
No artist would dare to paint, and no writer  
Shall ever describe —  
Only a wounded soldier screaming in the dark  
Has ever seen these things, and you, and you,  
Will be able to see them only in his eyes!

So all shall come to know some day  
That physical deprivation  
Is not too heavy a burden to carry  
For having gone over the trenches  
In France!

### *L'Envoi*

Even a poet without legs  
Has his usefulness.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Raoul's Last Nocturne

**M**USICIANS!

Let me tell you the story of Raoul  
The violinist —  
Gun-wadder of the 144th Field Artillery  
The good soldier,  
The violinist!

It was late  
In the Argonne forest,  
And he was playing a quaint air of Persia;  
Surely, you remember it:

“O moon of my delight, that  
knows no wane —”

The trees drew closer  
While we listened,  
And the wood-wind's breath  
Fell languishing  
In the arms of the shadowed branches.

Arias from many an outlander's retreat  
Lulled the gloaming

## AFTER THE DAY

With dulcet cadences of peace,  
And the sun had gone  
In gorgeous conflagration  
Behind the smoking battlements of France.

He raised his antique instrument and bow,  
Standing at ease against the barricade;  
And we, so tired of strife  
Were gathered there  
To hear the strange tales  
Fashioned by his Art.

Still! A moment hesitant,  
And then on slow wings lilting  
By wistful strains  
And semblances obscure  
He struck some prelude  
Kindred to the hour,  
And drew a thousand visions from the Dark.

Awhile he stood,  
Improvising themes on happy valleys,  
Pastorals, and sylvan inference,  
When hold! The trees —  
Were *those* the trees of Argonne?  
Nay? Then, say —



## AFTER THE DAY

Whence came that fragrance of Sierran air,  
That westering, deep draught from overseas?

. . . . .

Before our eyes  
The purple ranges loomed,  
And snow-clad mountains thrilling to the stars!

We found ourselves in canyons  
Deep, and crimsoning aflame;  
Were lost on dim slopes  
Where the cedar grieves —  
And roamed beneath the confidence of pines!

We heard the primal moon-song of coyotes,  
Saw gaunt shadows  
Creeping on the mesa —  
Saw camp fires  
Gleaming through the dusk. . . .

Heard the requiem of rain  
Across the sage!

We saw him swayed  
Through those insistencies  
Conferred by Self, impassionate and sad;  
His was a message

## AFTER THE DAY

Stirred in lyric shades  
For us alone —

It was like the presence  
Of some furtive Soul  
Searching the wide, white heavens  
For its mate,  
And all the plaintive yearning  
Of the strings,  
Rose in answer  
To our lonely hearts!

We lived, and died,  
And lo. . . .

—*awake in bourns*  
*Beyond all present understanding:*

*We hear the early carols of Aidenn*  
*Hear the matins*  
*Of orioles homing in Eolian dawns. . . .*

*Lydian measures,*  
*Heedless of the moment —*  
*And melodies exotic*  
*Follow fugues*  
*Hushed by the gloom of Ages;*

## AFTER THE DAY

*We are in silent wonder of that man  
Who can with subtle fingers  
And his bow  
Draw poignant meanings  
From the wilderness.*

*On meads untenanted  
By graves —  
Peal chords of April's green gladness!*

*Where the harvest, weary ox-wain creaked,  
Our swart artillery  
Scars the tongueless sod;  
And in and out their wheels  
Dark poppies blow —  
And over them  
Marauding birds go by!*

*Pandean pipes  
Forgotten in the glades  
Rejoice once more  
Through the drear solitude of Argonne.*

*And we stay  
Like a gathering of Bacchanalian gods  
Hearing the wine-songs  
Of old Arcady!*

## AFTER THE DAY

Slender reeds  
In favored places wrought,  
Spoke of a spell  
Transmuted by the elves  
That men may seek forever  
To no end;  
So touched by lips  
All wanton wooed, and wild,  
They make young lilies  
Tremulous at eve,  
When every lolling lotus  
On the lake  
Yearns for somnolent dews!

We heard soft flutes  
Ineffable, and sweet,  
And trolls their pretty signals trumpeting;  
Satyrs insubordinate, and sprites  
Laughing unduly —  
And many gnomes cavorting out of ranks!

We heard the dryad's intimate tattoo,  
And sylphic fifes  
Blown faintly from the hills. . . .

We heard their tiny timbrels  
At dayfall,

## AFTER THE DAY

So seeking,  
By articulated wile and rustic whim,  
To captivate the iris-hidden streams —  
With murmurous delight  
To fascinate  
Those vales of startled Echo  
Where tremble and begins  
The intimation of Elysian Song.

Adagios complained from dawn to dawn  
Against the rude reluctances of Night;  
There too, Andantes  
Holding trysts celestially remote —  
Sung with their certain diffidence, aspiring  
Toward the pale ports of the Pleides.

While over all, in pæns, on, and on,  
Like some vast oratorio  
The exultant orbs  
Of Evening communed  
In far, illusive music  
Of the Spheres.

So did the bleak, unhallowed wood  
Avail surcease enchanting  
From the gyves of war,

## AFTER THE DAY

And we were lead by vagrant Genius  
To those far heights  
That mightily divide  
The sightless from the Sight.

We were his true, attentive audience  
The while he wove  
A myriad rhapsodies  
Into the loom of one Tonality;  
Calling rare voices  
From the East,  
And North, and South,  
And West, in motives blent  
From out the singing gardens of the World.

*“What was that, Sergeant?”*

*“Nothing, you fool!  
Let him play!  
Some leaves  
Scattered by a random shot;  
The guns of our friend, the Enemy  
Are speeding  
Dispatch bearers to Mars!  
Never mind —  
Let him play!”*

## AFTER THE DAY

Then in a surge of minor harmony  
It seemed his bow swept suddenly to tears —

We caught  
The secret pleadings of salt tides,  
And that sadness  
In the ocean's elegies;

So came dreams Holy,  
And glimpses  
Lost in sleep  
Of ancient galleons  
On the farthest main,  
Shrouded argosies  
At anchor —  
The surf booming  
On shores unknown. . . .

Coasts storm-crumbled,  
And cliffs  
Where the gray morn breaks;

The heave of an offing  
Swelling, sweeping;  
Combers crashing,  
Foaming, flowing —

## AFTER THE DAY

Then mist-ridden crests,  
And a drifting spar . . .  
And the sea's face  
Flung with spray!

You who have prayed  
When the mad typhoon  
Gnashed its teeth  
In the biting gale —  
You who have heard  
Most tortured waves  
Cry out to the frenzied skies —  
You would have plunged  
Through those wild waters,  
Wilder yet with flood  
Of Sound tempestuous;  
You would have understood, somehow,  
While he played. . . .

You who have known  
The rimrock ways,  
And the trails of the unbought West  
Who have staked your bivouac  
In the heart of the hills, or have closed  
Your lids on the desert's loneliness,  
And the long twilight, on the cherished plains



## AFTER THE DAY

In the trove of Youth's lost years —  
You would have thought  
Of those untrammelled haunts  
So far from Argonne (Christ, how far!)  
And yet so near  
To something in your souls;

You would have listened  
While he played,  
Your lips mute and your throat  
In sorrow locked —  
While the eyes of comrades  
And your own  
Brimmed full with memories!

. . . . .  
*"Sergeant! What has happened?  
Good God! My shoulder. . . .  
Blood . . . nothing . . . but . . . blood . . .*

*"Raoul! Where are you?  
Raoul —"*

*"Shut up, you fool!  
He was interrupted  
By one of Fritz's shells;  
I found his helmet*

## AFTER THE DAY

*A few moments ago  
And here,  
You may have it —*

*A fragment  
Of his fiddle!”*

## AFTER THE DAY

### The Shell Crater

I HAD been wandering  
Through the forest of Epinoy —

And in the wild, mid region of my walk  
I paused beside a shell crater.  
It had filled  
With turgid downpour, drainage, and the dew  
From silent mounds, unnumbered and unnamed.

It resembled the visage of a tarn,  
Over which a cold moon rising, traced  
Most strange, fantastic figures;  
And the trees of Epinoy  
Sighed close to the mouth of the crater.

A voice  
Fell through the wistful wood.  
It was indistinct,  
And not from the branches;  
It was low,  
Like the lament of a spirit. . . .

## AFTER THE DAY

Long I paced, long  
In the drifting mists,  
Alone, in the Silence.

Nothing  
Was distinguishable there,  
Nothing beyond a desolation  
On the water —  
Nothing save those figures, made fantastic  
By the moon's saffronic glaze.

Then I glanced  
Above the crater —  
And saw that the trees of Epinoy  
Swayed with a dark unrest.  
Whereat, I concluded the voice  
Was a sadness on the wind;  
Or some sylvan grief  
Such as woodlands know  
When the last leaves die —  
When the fronds fall, fluttering  
From their gnarled arms!

But the sigh continued, like the voice  
Of a spirit lamenting.

## AFTER THE DAY

Finally, the surface of the tarn  
Stirred by the late insistence of the breeze —  
Wrinkled its visage  
And danced, with a melancholy rhythm,  
Almost in trend, I fancied  
To the whisper of its shadows;  
While the moon, shone solemnly  
And cold!

Then a far thunder reverberated  
— It was nocturnal canonading  
From artillerists unknown —

Swiftly, the red-tongued lightning  
Licked skyward, its sudden prongs  
Stabbed the trees of Epinoy —  
And their limbs, their bereaved branches  
Groaned from wounds inflicted by the storm;  
And there was a multitude of sighs.

Leaning forward, striving to discern  
What sorrow upward welled  
From the crater —  
To my terror, I beheld  
The haggard features of a soldier.  
His drenched hair

## AFTER THE DAY

Lapped by the undulations,  
Writhed, like kelp around his forehead;  
And the lips were parted  
As though his soul had flown  
While struggling to articulate  
Some unrequited prayer! A glimpse —  
And the chill waters of the tarn  
Closed over him forever.

The surface  
Resumed its sullen languor —  
The winds  
Abated utterly, and the trees  
Of Epinoy communed no more,  
Save in the low, least murmurs  
Of a forest.

I had been wandering,  
And in the wild, mid region of my walk  
This incident occurred;

*Yet so surely as God  
Lets me tell you,  
I saw naught but mine own reflection  
In the crater!*

## AFTER THE DAY

### • Before Cambrai

A SHARPSHOOTER, before the taking of  
Cambrai

Aimed carefully at my silhouette, while I stood  
On sentinel duty, under the stars.

His bullet tore through one eye and out of the  
other —

So now, when lately the moon  
Mounts heavenward, and the myriad constella-  
tions

Look down from their undaunted heights,  
I wonder if they see, in that vast darkness of  
theirs,

Any more than one whose individual night  
Has closed him from them forever!

I have walked forth on June mornings,  
When the great orb of the Sun  
Observed every idle cloud in passing;  
I have turned my face up to those aerial  
meadows,

## AFTER THE DAY

Marveling if all the vague translucencies of Day  
Were akin to them, as utter blackness  
Is to me, or if the dews of dawn  
Are ever like the blindness of tears!

Yet to one who dwells in shadow  
There comes, sooner or later,  
A reverence for the depths of things;  
And I have had such visions  
That few with eyes can know —  
Learned of the inner sources that illumine,  
And soothed my hours with opalescent dreams!

There is a steadfast gleaming  
In the lightness of my heart,  
And I have seen the beacon of my Soul.



## AFTER THE DAY

### Le Poilu

**D**RENCHED to the skin, knee-deep in mud,  
Disheartened, all but dead —  
This was the condition, most pitiable and true,  
Of a small detachment at the Marne.  
Among them, yet not one of a group,  
But standing aside (as I have noticed heroes do),  
Was a young, French guardsman.

They were anxious, those exhausted defenders,  
And their faces twitched from the torment of  
suspense ;

Some were chilled by long exposure,  
Others flushed with fever,  
All were anxious, these bleeding patriots,  
And most of all, the young French guardsman,  
As he stood in the gathering shadows  
Watching every slight manœuvre of the enemy  
Through a space between the trench-sacks.

After a lapse of silence, he whispered something :  
It was in no way a signal,  
And would have aroused little attention  
Were it not for the restive fervor of the man  
And that strange gaze in his eyes —

## AFTER THE DAY

As he stood in the gathering shadows  
Watching between the trench-sacks.

“What did he say?” ventured one.

“Look at his haggard features!” said another.

“I know the type; he will die fighting!” concluded a third.

And all of his tired comrades,  
Peered at the young French guardsman.

Again his lips moved:

“*They shall not pass!*” he breathed;

And the winds of evening caught that phrase,  
Whirling it like a leaf at twilight  
Into the heart of France!

You have already heard it,  
It has become familiar to you  
Afar East; and to you, afar West —  
And to the clans of the North,  
And to the tribes of the South.

But no one knows that a young French guards-  
man

Was first to utter those words, drenched to the  
skin,

Knee-deep in mud, disheartened, all but dead —  
As he stood in the gathering shadows,  
In the grim dusk of the Marne.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Departure

*FAREWELL! The path I take  
May have a scarlet ending,  
Or blaze in a wide, wild radiance  
Unknown to us;  
Nevertheless, farewell!*

My knapsack is adjusted —  
All the implements of war  
Are strapped to my shoulders,  
And on my heart rides a stone  
To balance these securely.

*The path I take  
May have a scarlet ending —  
Or lie under gold, rich skies  
Spun marvellously  
Of dawns, and days, and darks  
In splendor flung  
With glory unsurmised!*

Yet you will be dreamed of there,  
And I  
Shall have fine memories of mirth,

## AFTER THE DAY

Of sudden caresses  
And the low-mooned bayou,  
All holy with quiet, and your whispers!

*Farewell! The path I take  
Leads on to bleeding valleys  
Shrapnel gashed, and furtive with the ghosts  
Of many travellers. . . .*

My boots are oiled for service,  
My helmet is lustrous and new;  
My rifle's fit, and the flags  
Untattered where I go —

But if a moveless, strange black horror  
Comes uprushing to my eyes,  
And I am gone  
Into the enduring dusts from you —  
Yet will I take your image far with me,  
Remembering  
Your undaunted lonesome, and your smile.

*And some night  
You will find me in your arms,  
Pleading —  
For the eventual white flame  
Of your lips!*

## AFTER THE DAY

### Antoine, the Birdman

**A** NTOINE was an aviator  
Before the storming of Ypres.  
But after that day, when he fell from the  
clouds —

He assumed another rôle,  
And was known as an invalid  
At the base Hospital.

Some terror of the altitudes  
Deranged his mind,  
Lucky fellow though he was —  
To have caught his plane  
In a draught of air  
One sheer league from the soil!

I recall at the time  
How we rushed to congratulate him,  
But he was gone —  
A strange, sad creature  
Looked at us instead, regarded us queerly  
As we lead him away by the arm.

## AFTER THE DAY

After a few days  
We noticed he continually  
Referred to himself as a "bird"  
And insisted with surprising eloquence  
That we need only to "exert our Will"  
To fly. Poor Antoine —  
The mania of the heights  
Had gripped him surely,  
And though we sought to pacify his soul  
We knew nevertheless, we knew!

He argued  
With rare ingenuity —  
Saying an eagle had explained matters  
Above the clouds!

An alert, and dapper aviator  
Was Antoine —  
Small, wiry of limb,  
And agile, to a degree scarcely human.  
His nose was aquiline,  
Like a hawk's —  
And in the quick comprehension of his gaze  
He seemed to take  
A birdseye view of us. . . .

## AFTER THE DAY

After his accident  
He walked no more,  
But hopped, as it were,  
From place to place  
With his arms crooked at the elbow —  
Like pinions.

His voice was shrill,  
And the words he used  
Were chirped across the veranda  
From his perch  
On the wide, porch railing.

It all happened last night —  
And I shudder now, to divulge this information :

Someone had conceived the idea  
Of a masquerade for our convalescents.  
Those not too incapacitated  
Had nurses for their partners,  
Visitors, and such ;  
While others of us, in chairs  
And on crutches, watched the dancers.

Suddenly the room  
Was darkened by a sweeping Shadow :—

## AFTER THE DAY

And lo, Antoine the birdman  
Had made his entrance, garbed as a falcon !

The costume was excellent —  
Huge, ebony wings  
Extended celestially  
Down from his shoulders.  
And from the feet (that were claws)  
Upward, his body was encased  
In glistening, black feathers.

His eyes  
Shone over the beak of him  
Like a condor's, burning  
With malignant lustre ;  
And so amazing was the impression he made,  
So bizzarre, so true, so in keeping with his  
mind —  
That the unexpected appearance,  
Like an apparition silencing us a moment  
By the shadow cast,  
Was as suddenly greeted  
With long, and sincere applause.

Thereat, pluming himself,  
He stepped sedately to the centre of the hall



## AFTER THE DAY

And claimed, *for his first dance*  
The Chaplain's daughter.

This was not madness —  
It was genius!  
She had come  
Dressed as a canary,  
A timid, yellow thing; a small  
Winsome maid, a "bird" girl  
Fluttering lightly  
Over the shining surface of the floor.

The music of a waltz began,  
And to its lilting measures swiftly  
Swooping, whirling, round and round  
They glided, scarcely touching  
The tips of their toes to the wax.

Louder sounded the violins,  
Wilder encircling  
The canary and the falcon flew,  
Until the panel doors  
Blew open at a gust of wind —

Whereupon, with startling decision  
He clutched her in his claws  
And darted away, through the Night.

## AFTER THE DAY

“Splendid!” we applauded;  
“A superb effect — ”

But the Chaplain  
Was pale, and we suppressed  
Our approval, subdued  
Our cheering, wondering why —

Then a wild fear  
Leaped in our hearts  
With the realization that he was *mad* —  
And the cliffs  
A stone’s throw away!

The remembrance  
Of his insistent argument  
That flying  
Was an ability of the Will  
Came to us, as we saw his figure  
Swallowed up by the gathering darkness;  
Came to us as we watched him  
Half hopping, half soaring,  
In flight over the intermediate grasses —  
Making for the promontory.

A chorus of cries arose —  
And all of us, on sticks, and crutches,

## AFTER THE DAY

In wheel-chairs, and rockers,  
Stumbled, fell, limped, rushed  
With united impulse  
After the fleeing falcon, with one thought  
To save the little canary  
Palpitating, trembling, helpless in his talons!

The edge of the cliff was reached  
With nothing there, and all  
Our efforts were in vain.

Hesitating, some of us imagined  
We discerned a bleeding, inert mass  
On the far rocks below —

And some who gazed into the sky  
Thought they heard  
Growing fainter, and fainter,  
The whirr of enormous wings. . . .

## AFTER THE DAY

### Found in a Diary

I AM hiding in a shell-hole.  
There is no possibility of escape. For hours  
The whining missils overhead  
Have told me that!

Yet Hope, like the last drop in a canteen,  
Has made it easier to wait. . . .

Sooner or later, a spray of shrapnel  
Will end it all;  
That howitzer's puff of smoke in the clearing —  
Will it offer some delectable of Death?  
Or one of those mortars,  
Two hundred yards away. . . .

A day, a night, another day, and now  
The fingers of dusk are closing around me —  
They are creeping over this waste of mud, and  
debris,  
They are moving, *they are reaching for me!*

## AFTER THE DAY

A shadow is an evil thing,  
And there is an uncouth leer  
In the eyes of Evening.

The "seventy-fives" "whizzbangs"  
"Skodas" "eighty-eights"  
"Nine-twos" —

All of these scream by,  
Sobbing to themselves, yauping to one another  
For a day, a night, and a day!

Suppose one should spurt through my skull, sud-  
denly,

Blast a shoulder off,  
Tear my legs to shreds, or plow  
An exit through my lungs —

Yet after some such shattering  
I might live; *Jesus!*  
I might *want* to live. . . .

No! no! no! These hours of waiting  
Have earned me more than that!  
I am entitled to my throw of the dice —  
I deserve to die,  
I have a right to die!

## AFTER THE DAY

Ah, let me be!

Why do you follow me through the air,  
You shrieking, weeping creatures —  
Do you want to find me, gash me, grind me  
Into the drifts, and the dusts?

Why do you cry when you pass me. . . .  
Does such rude traveling hurt lead?  
I wonder if it grieves iron  
To disturb the blameless breeze —  
I wonder if it pains iron  
To hiss through a fair, West wind!

Should I be hit, I would not survive —  
(Something in me rebels at the thought of sur-  
viving!)  
It might come by any direction,  
Or be hurled earthward, from the clouds.

Would you want to be wounded, unexpectedly?  
No man does!  
The thing to do is to arrange for death,  
To make careful preparation. . . .

My bayonet is very sharp; it could fit in my  
chest, to the hilt. . . .

## AFTER THE DAY

Suppose some damned explosive found me  
here. . . .

The shock, the suddenness, the utter agony,  
From something to nothing, in one blinding  
instant!

No man would wait for that —

No man *can* wait for that!

So why should I delay matters?

Why should I be waiting

When there is no chance,

No way of escape from here . . .

And should I rise, I would fall!

A day, a night, another day, and now . . .

My bayonet is very sharp!

It could fit in my chest, to the hilt —

And if it does not, some Hun's hot bullet will. . . .

Who wants to be torn, from limb to limb,

By a Hun's infernal device —

Who would wait to be *shot*

When your own bayonet is clean, and keen?

God! I can stand it no longer —

The terror of a midnight mad with flame,

The fear of another morning. . . .

## AFTER THE DAY

*There!*

*I have plunged it . . .*

*Fitted it . . . in my chest . . . to the hilt!*

*You will say I was afraid . . . to . . . die . . .*

*Afraid to die . . . all suddenly . . . to . . . die . . .*

*I was . . . afraid . . . to . . . live . . .*

*I . . . was . . . afraid . . .*

*To . . . die!*



## AFTER THE DAY

### Soldier, Answer Me!

SOLDIER, answer me!  
What are you fighting for?  
Is it the archaic joy of battle  
Or the conceit of arms;  
Is it a desire to flaunt your courage  
In the face of Providence,  
Is it for the bauble of Popularity?

*It is some of these things, Man,  
But most of all  
It is an heritage in my heart  
That stirs  
At the wild roll of drums!*

Soldier, answer me!  
What are you bleeding for?  
Is it a ruse to dodge the slings of Fate  
Is it a chance you take  
In the game of War —  
Is it a play  
For the indulgence of a contrite world;

## AFTER THE DAY

Is it a profanation of the body  
For the sake of the Soul?

*It is some of these things, Man,  
But most of all,  
It is a glad awakening  
At the cry of bugles!*

Soldier, answer me!  
What are you dying for?  
Is it to justify the error  
Of politicians,  
Is it to glorify some leader —  
Is it a satiation  
At the vain pursuits, and mockeries of men;  
Are you indulgent only to yourself,  
Having no desire to share  
Your life with others —  
Do you long for the solid comfort  
Of a grave?

*It is some of these things, Man,  
But most of all  
It is because I was born  
On the soil of my forefathers;  
I am a young custodian*

## AFTER THE DAY

*Of their lands.  
War is the privilege  
Of my race —  
Birth gave it me,  
And Death  
Will not take it away!*

## AFTER THE DAY

### Pere Lachaise

YOU, who have been to France —  
While in Paris  
Did you go to the cemetery  
Of Pere Lachaise?

On entering,  
Up the cypress avenue  
To the "Monument of the Dead"  
By Bartholomé,  
Do you recall the figures  
Full of pathos  
On that sarcophagus of limestone?  
They represent Humanity  
Pressing forward  
To the door of the tomb!

That marble chapel  
Erected to Thiers —  
And the tribute  
To Abelard and Héloïse!  
Under a Gothic canopy

## AFTER THE DAY

Those statues are shaded,  
Symbolizing the love and misfortune  
Of two whose plight  
Has been a theme  
For many poets.

Here is the last, surviving evidence  
Of famous authors,  
Dramatists, and composers —  
Remembered by an image,  
A medallion, or a bust ;  
And within the gloom  
Of every shrouded thing  
A moral lies !

It is fair to see  
With what fine reverence the French  
Honor their men and women  
Of genius, whose work  
Has made the immortality  
Of a Nation.

Here, where the quaking aspen  
Trembles windward,  
And the yew plays, quietly,  
(Greener, far, than those

## AFTER THE DAY

On the Champs Elyseés!)

Repose the dreamers  
Of unburied Science,  
Philosophy, and Art!

So musing, on all  
That is, or was —  
And all  
That shall not be again,  
I realized (as my footfall  
Crushed the future of a flower!)  
How each solitary path  
Holds the mould of men whose fame  
Survives them,  
And of women more beautiful  
Than many passing in the sun.  
And I saw, too,  
The mounds of children  
Whose cheeks alas, held  
No sententious tinge  
Of their dawns, nor any glimmering  
From those far gates where silently  
The shadows come, and go!

You, on furlough from Chateau Thierry  
Did no message come to you,

## AFTER THE DAY

Born on the restive airs —  
None of their words, no answer  
To stir your heart's lone questioning?

I heard young zephyrs  
Holding secrets here —

And so arose a murmuring at dusk  
That told of Kings  
Who found antiquity  
One everlasting Night;  
And some of Thought's nobility  
Had passed,  
And those who searched Within —  
Whereat the world  
Knew them no longer!

These souls were great,  
And each for greatness sued —  
Yet one by one they faltered on the Way  
And their voices  
Are become nocturnal echoes, flung  
From star to star.

Some toilers gain late laurels  
For their pain;

## AFTER THE DAY

Yet when Success  
Its bounty would bestow,  
Time clutches for the wreath —  
And uses it  
To decorate a tomb!

I think there is no grief  
So fathomless  
As the least lily  
Pleading by a wall;  
Nor anything  
More sad than vines  
Clinging to an old friend's monument.

They seem to have their transitory moments,  
Their unfamiliar, small ambitions,  
Seeking from enclasped granite  
Some eminence, there to gaze  
Upon the aspect of Eternity.

What more could you attain,  
Or these poor, inert mortals?  
The smallest fern  
Does well,  
And they fared ill; and you also  
Are but a minion  
Of Life's old disasters.



## AFTER THE DAY

O, men of Hope  
And men of urging Will!  
And you who dwell  
In Wisdom's halls,  
So lonely, and so high!

There is no leaf  
Inferior to you —

And where your consecrated deeds abide,  
Your prejudice, and pride,  
And where your votive tapers flare  
Against the passing Dark;  
Age will beckon with a withered finger —  
Wherever you are  
Its cold insistency will be. . . .

On the final pyres  
No sacrifice  
Will answer for your Self,  
No other heart  
Lie in your cerements!

But fruitage of the twilight  
Are men's souls,  
And though the race be hard

## AFTER THE DAY

The winning near, or far,  
A graveyard claims each weary contestant.

If you hesitate, doubting  
Because I was afraid at Cantigny —  
Go to the resting place  
Of those  
From whom you are descended;  
Listen to the evening's searching breeze  
When it drifts  
Into sepulchres, and out again,  
When it curls under the eaves of dark  
    mausoleums  
And departs  
With a far whisper of despair. . . .

If you understand its errand,  
If you know what it seeks, and where it goes —  
You will not be forgotten.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Croix De Guerre

FROM fields of carnage  
I brought her souvenirs:  
A beryl signet  
Torn from one the Emperor  
Had honored;  
Also, a case of old Damascus  
And some trifles  
Gathered at twilight  
From those  
Whose throats were stopped in dust.

*"But these are not treasures," she said;  
"To have value  
They must be gems of fire!"*

Then, hesitating,  
I displayed  
The small, bronze *croix de guerre*  
With which a famous man  
Had decorated me,  
Saying it was for a little thing I did —  
At Chalons.

## AFTER THE DAY

*“But it is not of gold,” she replied;  
And alas, the ribbon is stained!”*

Whereat I went away  
Thinking these unfit presents for the one  
I loved.

And for hours  
I wandered through the streets  
Until someone  
Touched my arm in the shadows:

*“That medal on your chest, mon cherie —  
Tell me about it!”*

A long time she listened,  
And that night  
I entered the door of Happiness.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Wounded

**S**ING me a song, *Fleurette!*  
I have taken the medicine  
As *Messieur le Docteur*  
Prescribed it —  
And my pain . . . my pain . . . is sleeping!”

“Bien, chérie!  
I know a little French one,  
Taught me in the Convent of the *Sacré Coeur*:

“Petals falling,  
Breezes calling  
Blossoms from the grain;

Lilies sighing  
Violets crying—  
Weeping in the rain!

The moon an incense-breathing censer swings  
Across the drowsy foliage of Night —  
O, by the casement sings a maiden, O!

## AFTER THE DAY

The winds from scented gardens pass, like wings  
Of many moths in strange, nocturnal flight —  
O, by the casement sings a maiden, O!

Her song is of the petals  
As they fall,  
Her voice is in the breezes  
As they call  
To blossoms from the grain,  
Lilies sighing  
Violets crying —  
And every heart soft weeping  
In the rain!"

*"Very good, Fleurette.  
Now, if you will turn out the light —  
I believe I can rest for a while."*

## AFTER THE DAY

### A Whisper at the Gate

“ *I LOVE you!*”

*He would say, so often  
Under the trees by the garden gate;  
But he went to the front, Monsieur.  
Only his words remain,  
Like the perfume of flowers that have fallen —”*

I know the sorrow  
Of that peasant girl in Louvain —  
She was one  
Who had bade adieu forever  
To a valiant defender of France.

“ ‘*I love you!*’

*He would say, so often  
Under the trees by the garden gate —”*

Whispering on the timorous air of night —  
How often have her words  
Strayed across our heartstrings!  
How often do they stir the leaves of Yesterday  
And the blossoms of Today;

## AFTER THE DAY

From what dreaming vista  
Has that yearning gone away —  
Over what streams, confiding  
When the moon swings low. . . .

It is the burden of the winds,  
And the sorrow of the sea!

“ ‘*I love you!*’  
*He would say, so often —*”

Memory brought only that,  
And her heart fell, lost  
Like a rose  
In the Winter’s blowing.

“ ‘*I love you!*’—”



## AFTER THE DAY

### The Albatross

I SAW an albatross —  
Dead, and the shifting sands  
Sought to conceal  
This too presumptuous sorrow,  
Sought silently  
To so engulf it, that the passing stars  
Might shine ungrieved.

For all men know  
The gray breath of the sea,  
Know the storm's wrath, and its courier  
That cries wild warning  
To the shores of morn. . . .

I saw an albatross,  
Dead, swollen, slowly floundered  
By receding waters. I saw  
Its body; I lost  
That semblance of the dim, drenched heavens  
Urging from cliff to cloud above  
The unrest of the sea!

## AFTER THE DAY

I missed the white, gleaming wing  
Against my blue world;  
The calm eye and lone, liquescent lilt  
From opal crests; the dipping into these  
For sudden, silvered treasure —  
Revelling, rejoicing, reposing  
In the wind's wake;  
High feathering, low darting,  
All finally to soar  
Into arid silence, nightward seeking.

Long had it flown, long before me  
Over the sad ocean, over the ruins  
Of many a yesterday. . . .

I stood  
In mute reverence  
At that burial, by waters receding,  
Under the passing stars.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Domesday

WHEREUPON a flame  
Engulfed them,  
And our land  
Of long enchantment  
Crumbled under fire  
Terrific from retaliatory suns.

In torrid vapors  
Broiled the seas and rivers of an outcast  
world. . . .

Crawled they, rising like ebullient serpents,  
Seething, commingling, merging moonward,  
Leaping of red tongues, licking the spheres —  
Writhing perilously on high;  
Then rushed they down, in final cataracts,  
To the last, phantasmagoric Abyss.

. . . . .

All pulseless were the tides,  
And tottering to silence  
Every avatar of Light:

## AFTER THE DAY

The welkin had no cloud,  
No morn its dew :—

No tree found leaf  
And verdure was refused,  
And every bloom died unsought  
On the sedge, and bough, and vine.

All heaven was abandoned ;  
The winds,  
Once many voiced, continuous, and fair  
Were fallen at hush —

Oceans ceased to stir,  
And stagnant they lolled  
Untremulous against the shores of Night.

*Only a laughter, infinite and wild,  
Rang from the nocturnal peaks of Chaos.*

A laughter,  
Sardonic and convulsed  
With all the mad hyprocrisies of Time —

Rolling from no special height, nor plain,  
Dismal, discorporate, wailing  
Ribald at the nothingness of Doom.

## AFTER THE DAY

There was no use for symphonies, and such,  
Nor letters, nor the protoplasmic scheme  
Of anything beneath the cindered stars.

What with wild wars  
And devastated Hope  
The evidence of Man  
Had burned away ;

Contestless, ruined, insensate  
Was Creation ;  
Without our strange posterity —  
And impotent, and cold.

The mirage of Life  
Had been, but was no more.

*A fatal, overwhelming Dark  
Prevailed,  
And in the dark, that Laughter!*

## AFTER THE DAY

### \*Amerongen Castle

PACING the garden  
Of Amerongen Castle,  
He walks continuously —  
Up and down the graveled pathways  
Of the grounds.

Bowed in reflection,  
With his arms  
Clasped behind him;  
Endless is his promenade —  
Walking up and down the graveled pathways  
Of Amerongen Castle.

Peasants go clattering along  
The canal banks,  
Down the verdant dykes and dunes of Holland —  
Laughing a great deal in the sun,  
Contented, loquacious;

But on the far side of the wall  
There is a man who does not laugh,

---

\*“Amerongen” is a cryptic word, spelling One German. Rearrange the letters, and see for yourself.

## AFTER THE DAY

Who paces only the gardens  
And who does not laugh.

The sun goes down  
And the moon ascends,  
And the peasants  
Sing on the levee —  
On the silver waters  
The peasants are singing;

But on the far side of the wall  
There is a man who does not sing,  
A man who walks  
The graveled paths of Amerongen —  
And who does not sing.

Nothing is more continuous, incessant, and persistent  
Than his walking —  
Up and down, up and down,  
From this gate, on to that,  
From one wall to another.

Never will the thoughts of him  
Still those footsteps for a moment,  
Nor stay  
The long march of his Conscience.

## AFTER THE DAY

And as he paces  
It is like a tread  
On the dead hearts of men —  
Treading with each step, treading  
On a heart!

Bowed in reflection,  
With his arms  
Clasped behind him —  
Over his brow comes a chilling,  
Comes a throbbing, so continuous,  
So incessant, and prolonged —  
Up and down the graveled pathways  
By Amerongen walls;

There are many hearts to pace there,  
To account for, to absolve,  
On the Castle's graveled pathways  
By Amerongen walls. . . .

There are many steps to pace,  
Ere the final Step.



## AFTER THE DAY

### The Sniper

HE told me this yarn, like a schoolboy,  
While I bandaged his hand by the fire:

*“Boches! That’s what they were —  
Five of us  
Took their dug-out in the morning;  
The fog  
Was heavy over Chalons,  
It wrapped the trenches in gray,  
Clung to the wires, and dripped  
From every broken tree. . . .*

*We heard them laughing,  
And nobody can stand that, in the shivering  
dawn!*

*Bind the gauze tightly, Sam,  
Never mind the salve —*

*What’s a thumb, more or less?  
I haven’t used mine  
Since I was a baby;*

## AFTER THE DAY

*Aw, stop looking so seriously —  
It's a little thing!*

*Crawling, scarcely breathing,  
Stopping, continuing under the entanglements—*

*So! Five grenades forward;  
Mud, and moans, then 'Kamerad!'*

*Twenty of 'em, Sam,  
Cringed against the gunnies!*

*It was easy work, we thought,  
And filed away, when —*

*Well . . . what could I use it for?  
Thumbs up, thumbs down —  
Ha! ha! I guess I wasn't made to be  
A Vestal Virgin!*

*We thought we had 'em all,  
But a puff  
Came over the clearing —  
One of us  
Stumbled forward —  
Sudden blood  
Bubbled from his ears,  
And the sniper . . . had scored!*

## AFTER THE DAY

*'Nevermind, pal; he'll pay!'*  
*Again the puff, and a pang*  
*Somewhere shoulderward —*  
*But this time we saw his rifle*  
*Gleam against the ridge;*  
*Caught a glint of steel*  
*In a first, faint ray*  
*Of the sun!*

*We*  
*Crouched, and waited.*

*Bill's helmet on the end of a stick*  
*Was a good decoy —*  
*The fool shot twice, then,*  
*Shells gone, and frightened,*  
*He stood up, raised his arms, and shouted*  
*As those had done whom we spared:*  
*'Kamerad!' 'Kamerad!'*

*'Kamerad, be damned!' said Bill.*  
*So we pumped the full contents*  
*Of our automatics —*  
*Into his crumbling chest, into his rotten heart!''*

He told me this yarn, like a schoolboy,  
While I bandaged his hand by the fire.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Passing in the Sun

**T**ODAY  
I saw them passing  
In the sun —  
The khakied ranks  
And regiments of War.

I saw  
An urgent multitude  
Of friends, and the faces  
Of parents anticipating —

I saw  
Rejoicing, hearted women  
And patient tears  
Lo, laughing in their eyes. . . .

Today  
I saw them passing  
In the sun —  
The moon declining, and low vestal stars  
Beholden also, shone glimmering

## AFTER THE DAY

Down the flower-flung streets  
Gold garlanded, and silvern  
To the clatter of their feet.

Today  
I saw —  
*Somewhere he*  
*Was marching. . . .*

Dear Christ!  
Though the night  
Be nailed forever  
To my cross —

Let his dawn  
Bleed white with wings!

## AFTER THE DAY

### The Aviator

**D**UST, in clouds  
Envelop their machines,  
And the air burns, vibrating  
With discordant cries —

Orders  
From directing officers,  
Calls to linemen,  
Hurried explanations, a last shout  
To the machinist. Final commands —  
And then, farewell!

Over the low, shuddering grasses  
His airplane jerks, jolting  
To the utmost endurance.  
He grips the wheel, plunging headlong.

Suddenly a wind  
Lifts under the solitary man  
And lo,  
He is flying!

## AFTER THE DAY

On the wide sward  
Others are starting, and the sky  
Reverberates with throbbing hearts,  
With those strange, mechanical devices  
Beating on, and on, while their iron bosoms  
Heave and swell from the tumult  
Of a carbureted soul. . . .

Presently, the mists foregather  
Coming between. Gray waters  
Roll far beneath —  
All on the field, moments later  
Become gnats, and disappear.

From a distance, the clutter of his companions  
Sounds to him through cool spaces;  
Soon the song of their metallic throats  
Merges into whispering —  
And is heard no more.

Life itself, is such a coursing  
On lanes of azure —  
And we are all  
Solitary aviators!

Only, in this world-long race  
One after another

## AFTER THE DAY

Is outdistanced  
By an ultimate few  
Who are themselves deserted  
In the final stretch —

By one  
Who travels alone.

Long ago they left him,  
The birdmen careening earthward —

Onward he drives, feathering  
Through an icy, dim atmosphere.

Into the farthest ocean, shot by arrows  
Of deepening shadow  
Falls the wounded sun.

Illimitable night  
In mystery and silence,  
Closes around him —

Onward he goes, onward, onward.



## AFTER THE DAY

### Outriders of the Night

COURSING the roads at dayfall,  
In the midmost dusk they pass —  
The outriders of the Night.

I have seen them,  
If you ask me —  
From the gray heights of Vimy Ridge  
I have seen them  
Riding in the dawn,  
And in the bleak immensities of Dark.

My dreams  
Are fraught with spectral images —

I see old citadels, and gates  
Of massive bronze unopened save to Kings;  
Whereat comes One  
According to the stars —  
And lo, the locks, the idle bolts of Ages  
Fall asunder in the gloom!

## AFTER THE DAY

Who rides now,  
Those ancient lanes of France?  
Who strides the old, accustomed leagues  
With dim cavalry, betimes,  
Who leads the soldiery of other wars —  
Whose whispers  
Mingle in the day's late winds,  
Whose armor is of shadow, whose eyes  
Are glowless in the evening's enterprise?

She has entered Orleans,  
Mounted, at the head of many horsemen, she  
enters. . . .

It is vespersed twilight,  
And the bells  
Of phantom arches toll;

They draw rein before the cathedral,  
Before those demolished walls —  
That ruined pile  
Touched by no glint of sun,  
Nor any ray  
Prevailing its lost corridors. . . .

For a long time  
They remain —

## AFTER THE DAY

While the shades  
Lengthen, creep up, up,  
With ghostly hands  
Entreating some reprisal  
For the dead!

I have heard their hoof-beats  
In the silent, moon-dim valleys;  
I have heard their chargers breathing . . . drink-  
ing slowly . . .  
By the cool waters of the Meuse.

I have seen them  
Fleeing northward  
From the Somme, from the Marne —  
And the peasants at Ypres  
Know them well,  
The outriders of the Night!

Those who dwell  
In gray huts  
By the sea —  
Have felt the presence  
Of these tireless ones;

The fisherfolk at Calais  
Will gather round you, and tell

## AFTER THE DAY

How the dunes are forever murmuring of them,  
And the airs, low-blowing shoreward.

Toilers of the nets, and lighthouse guards  
Will speak of that darkest hour  
When Paris was at prayer —  
And what they heard, borne on the sudden  
wind. . . .

Some call them the “angels” of the Marne  
And some are mute, and there are others  
With a fine glint in their eyes —  
As if they, too,  
Had seen sights, stranger than the gift of words  
Will ever bring to men.

Coursing the roads at dayfall  
In the midmost dusk they pass —  
The outriders of the Night.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Le Strynge

**S***INISTER, grimacing,  
Laughing in the night,  
You, on the balustrade of Notre Dame  
Leering over the gargoyles,  
From the parapet and eminence of Faith!*

You, O faithless One!  
Believing not, and brooding  
With quaint mendacity  
Over the lights, and shades,  
Over the pleasures, and the pain of Paris.

Long have I regarded you, Strynge!  
A pagan  
On the edifice of Christ;  
Unsought, unseeking —  
Mocking the years, and the tears of us!

There is a strange, lack lustre in your eyes —  
A cold, forboding cynicism  
On your grotesque lips.

## AFTER THE DAY

In their shadow  
What crawling minions pass,  
Below you, pass in and out of the Church;  
Always crossing your shadow,  
Stepping into it, through it, out of it, and on.

Always below you, blots of men  
In your shadow! Below  
The strange, lack lustre in your eyes —  
And the cynicism  
On your grotesque lips.

Long have I regarded you, Strynge!  
Unsought, unseeking —  
Mocking the years, and the tears of us.

Are you not a pagan  
On the edifice of Christ?

*Are you waiting?*

## AFTER THE DAY

### Anarchy

I SAW the statue of Liberty  
Looming against New York.

I was a son of the plains,  
I believed in prophecies —

And mine eyes brimmed  
As the visions faded,  
As our transport  
Cleaved the waters of the wide Atlantic.

I am returning  
And there it is again,  
From my crutches I observe it —  
Colossal, strange, and menacing;

Alas, is it Liberty?  
I see a wanton, wild hag leering there —  
Gaunt of figure, shrunk to despair,  
And draped in the old habiliments of Crime.

## AFTER THE DAY

From the drear sockets  
Of her eyes  
Glare the lamps of civilized Revolt,  
Within the pent clutch of her hand  
Smolders a bomb. . . .

See that long, emaciated arm  
Uplifted through the gloom,  
And the torch  
Flaring its lurid challenge to the sky!



## AFTER THE DAY

### Post Mortem

I AM become an inmate  
Of man's ancient habitude!  
Dead, with the aid of Krupp —  
And a pale subaltern named Schnitzler.

Maddened by the sting of his rifle,  
I flung my tent-ax deep in his chest. . . .  
But an automatic had something to say,  
So I am here.

Dead! And the stars are sentinels,  
Always constant, never failing,  
Hovering ever, ever gleaming  
Over my stark remains!

My teeth . . . only my teeth  
Gleam back at them  
From the wide, Somme prairie.

## AFTER THE DAY

### Court Martial

(Guilty)

**N**O one in the regiment  
Regards me as a deserter —  
But you know otherwise,  
My lonely one!

I left you lately  
For the love of War,  
Honor became my mistress  
And a battlefield was our bed.

I have been promoted for loyal conduct,  
And no one knows  
Nor thinks, nor cares  
For the broken camp, and the pledge we plighted  
Under the vines at home!

## AFTER THE DAY

### Coup d'Etat

**P**EACE! Ah, there's a word!  
Now tell me, you who juggle:  
Have those nimble necromancers at Versailles  
Made it a just peace,  
Or just peace?

This is no trick, I assure you;  
It's diplomacy!  
And by that you may see  
How a word divides  
The false aim from the true.

Yet in such difference  
Lies our destiny.

## AFTER THE DAY

### De Profundis

**T**HE world expected so much of me,  
That in desperate attempts  
To forget,  
My heart was pierced  
And disconsolate,  
My soul fled into the Night.

The world expected so much of me,  
And insisted  
For so many years,  
That from urgent endeavor  
My lids have drooped —  
So now I lie in the dust.

# AFTER THE DAY

## The Great War

### Prologue:

**T**ELL you the story  
Of the Great War?

Be sure, my friends,  
It is no easy task —  
In so brief time,  
In such confining space.

Much may pass untold,  
Yet grant me leave!

A shot  
Was fired one day  
At Sarajevo, and I would tell you  
How it wounded half the world —  
If I but may:

1914

June 28.

The Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Aus-  
tria

## AFTER THE DAY

Is assassinated on this date,  
Which disposes of a successor  
To the throne of Karl.

July 5

The Crown Council of Germany  
Meets at Potsdam  
And decides on war.

July 28

Austria declares war  
On Serbia.

August 1.

Germany declares war on Russia  
And invades Luxemburg  
And Belgium.

August 3.

Germany declares war on France.

August 4.

Great Britain declares war on Germany.

August 25.

Germans destroy Louvain,  
And massacre the inhabitants.

## AFTER THE DAY

September 1.

German troops reach the outskirts  
Of Paris.

September 6.

The battle of the Marne  
Is fought in which the French  
Force the Germans  
To retreat to the Aisne River.

December 24.

The first German air raid  
Is made on England.

1915

May 7.

The Lusitania is torpedoed  
By a German submarine.

May 23.

Italy declares war on Austria.

August 20.

Italy declares war on Turkey.

October 12.

Edith Cavell is shot  
By Germans in Brussels.

## AFTER THE DAY

1916

February 21.

The German attacks on Verdun begin.

*"They shall not pass!"*—Petain.

April 19.

An American ultimatum

Is sent to Germany,

Threatening to break off relations

Unless American ships

Go unmolested.

May 31.

The Germans are defeated

In a naval battle off Jutland.

August 27.

Roumania declares war on Germany.

August 28.

Italy declares war on Germany.

1917

January 31.

Germany announces

Ruthless submarine warfare.



## AFTER THE DAY

February 3.

The United States  
Breaks off diplomatic relations  
With Germany.

April 6.

The United States  
Declares war on Germany.  
*“Make the world safe for Democracy!”*  
—Wilson.

June 26.

The first American troops  
Land in France.  
*“Lafayette, we are here!”*—Pershing.

June 29.

Greece declares war on Germany.

December 9.

Jerusalem is captured  
By the British.  
*“The law of Force  
Must yield to the force of Law!”*—Allenby.

## AFTER THE DAY

1918

March 3.

The Brest-Litovsk Treaty.

*"Germany at her worst!"*—Haig.

March 21.

The great German Offensive begins.

*"In Paris by the first of April!"*

—Hindenburg.

April 14.

General Foch is appointed commander-in-  
chief

Of the Allied Armies.

May 27

The last great German drive

Is begun on Paris.

They reach the Marne again.

June 6.

The American marines

Smash back at Chateau Thierry

Marking the turning point

Of the war.

## AFTER THE DAY

June 7.

General Omar Bundy  
An American commander,  
Refuses the French order  
To retreat.

June 23.

The Italians  
Drive the Austrians  
Back from their lines  
To a flight across the Piave  
With losses totaling one hundred fifty thousand soldiers.

July 12.

French and American forces  
Break the German Offensive  
North of Cantigny.

July 18.

Marshal Foch  
Begins his great counter-attack.

August 6.

German "75-mile" guns  
Kill civilians in Paris.

## AFTER THE DAY

August 25.

British battalions  
Cross the Hindenburg line  
North of the Scarpe.

September 2.

The United States  
Recognizes the Checho-Slovak Nation.

September 12.

The First American Army  
Takes fifteen thousand prisoners  
At St. Mihiel salient.

September 22.

British forces  
Trap the entire Turkish Army  
In Palestine.

September 30.

Bulgaria lays down arms.

October 18.

The Germans are driven back  
From the Belgian Coast.

## AFTER THE DAY

October 24.

The troops of Italy  
Launch a victorious offensive.  
Against Austria.

October 30.

Turkey surrenders.

November 3.

Austria surrenders.

November 7.

General Pershing  
Leads an American division  
To the capture of Sedan.

November 9.

The Kaiser of Germany  
Abdicates and departs for Holland.

November 11.

Germany surrenders  
To an Allied Armistice.



## Miscellaneous

## AFTER THE DAY

### I Saw a Dead Man

**I** SAW a dead man in the night,  
His body stark, his visage damp  
With chilling dews; I saw his hands  
That bore a rifle rigid quite,  
And medals on his chest, the lamp  
Of Heaven traced by lunar strands.

I saw a dead man in the night,  
His blackened jowls, his sunken eyes,  
The blood-clots on his matted hair.  
I saw his uniform; the light  
Of outraged stars gleamed with surmise  
Against his teeth, against his stare.

I saw a dead man in the night,  
His pallid silence, and the cold  
Of lifelessness creep over him;  
I saw his sabre, and the slight  
Wound mine had made. I saw unfold  
The wings of Death to cover him.



## AFTER THE DAY

I saw a dead man in the night,  
    Whose spirit long departed made  
    Of human semblance nothingness;  
I saw his shadow, and the might  
    Of untold comrades marching, fade  
    From earth to God. *Ah, Life were less!*

## AFTER THE DAY

### On Duty

I HEARD the tread o' soldier feet  
On withered leaves, an' dry.  
"Halt, an' give the Countersign —  
Who goes there?" hollers I.  
"*British Ambulance Corps!*"  
Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

"Pass, British Ambulance Corps!"  
An' "All is well!" says I;  
So shoulderin' me gun, I watched  
The Tommies marchin' by.

Again the tread o' soldier feet  
That night (the moon was high) —  
"Halt, an' give the Countersign,  
"Who goes there?" hollers I.  
"*French Ambulance Corps!*"  
Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

"Pass, French Ambulance Corps!"  
An' "All is well!" says I;

## AFTER THE DAY

So shoulderin' me gun, I watched  
The Poilus marchin' by.

I've told ye wat the Sergeants said,  
An' my woids wat were mine —  
(I follows post-instructions, an'  
I never miss a line!)

Along th' Wypers road at night  
The shells was burstin', say —  
(I seen more killed from dark to dawn  
Than ever died by day!)

An ups an' down the Avenoo  
The stretcher-bearers passed,  
From dawn to dark, and dark to dawn  
Wid wounded, dead, an' gassed.

"*Mon Dieu!*" I thinks the Commandmant  
Would say, an' so did I,  
When, once again, the tread o' feet  
On withered leaves, an' dry.

"Halt, an' give the Countersign —  
"Who goes there?" hollers I.  
"*None of your damn business!*"  
Was the Sergeant's prompt reply.

## AFTER THE DAY

“Pass, American Ambulance Corps!”

An’ “All is well!” says I;

So shoulderin’ me gun, I watched

The Yankees marchin’ by!

## AFTER THE DAY

### In a Belgian Prison

THIS is that dread hour  
Of the rising moon,  
Four thund'rous years ago —  
A night in June.

Here, where the lurking twilight creeps  
Through garden ferns,  
And shadows clasp ghost-fingers on  
The ivy'd urns;

Here, where a festive Belgian sings  
His joyous lay,  
And lovers' hearts beat to the drums  
The Allies play —

Here, I forever damned my soul:  
O'er fields of dire  
Unhallowed troops I flew, a Spy  
With word to fire!

This is that dread hour  
Of the rising moon,  
Four thund'rous years ago —  
A night in June.

## AFTER THE DAY

### In the Shadows

**I**T stands, a dark and melancholy tree  
Leaf-lorn beside the sorrow of that land;  
Somewhere against a gray, enshrouded  
strand

Echo nocturnes sighing from the sea  
Of days that pass; and in far Normandy  
Fair winds have died on grieving drifts  
of sand —

Somewhere in Flanders there's a shadowed  
Hand,  
Somewhere in France, a broken fleur-de-lis!

O night of Nations! When men's voices leap  
Athwart Titanic gulfs, and Tyrant power  
Hath rolled away like thunder from the Deep  
What cry shall rise in that wide, wondrous  
hour:

Behold, against the sky for all to see —  
A lonely crucifix on Cavalry!

## AFTER THE DAY

### A Cashmere Song

*O SAMAR! Sing to me of swans at eve  
And sleeping orchids where the twi-  
light falls  
On cadenced water, murmuring at dusk  
A requiem beside the Palace walls —*

*How in these dark and soundless gardens strayed  
Two mystic friends discoursing on their  
loves  
At sundown, while an amber, crescent moon  
Climbed starward o'er the Maharaja's  
groves!*

*“One was a King, who secretly had yearned  
Long years for that oft promised by the  
Rose,  
And one a Prince of Yesterday who came  
From rivers where the Scarlet Poppy blows.*

*“O King, in sanguine conquest I have tried  
By feat of Battle, and the glint of swords*

## AFTER THE DAY

To vanquish eager armies of thy foes —  
To humble to thy knee, the foreign Lords!

“ ‘My Prince,’ the King replied, ‘thou speakest  
well,

Yet it is vain. The bloom of Hope is past —  
A mighty wind hath smote the tree of Eld  
And lo, its leaves lie scattered in the blast!

“ ‘From out the West, beyond engulfing seas,  
Bronze legions plunge undaunted, and no  
dread

Nor any horror quells their clamoring;  
O Allah! Peace be with them! War is  
dead. . . .’

“No word was uttered more. The cypress paths  
A deep, sequestered whispering renewed;  
Whereat they vanished, and the voiceless gloom  
Mantled again that ancient solitude.

“What dust cries to the years! Those Palace  
walls

Have crumbled into silence and decay;  
No swans at twilight float among the reeds —  
And orchids, poppies, all have blown  
away!



## AFTER THE DAY

“Both King and Prince in closing mists have  
passed

Along the shadowed corridor of dreams . . .”

*O Samar! Thou art bathed in dawning light —  
Sing of a sorrow by forgotten streams!*











YB 12289

417553

*Bennett*

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

